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ABSTRACT

Minority representation in the graduate and professional schools is not in parity with the proportion of minorities in the overall population at this point in the history of American higher education. There are definite reasons for the lack of participation, reasons that have a profound philosophical, sociological, and economic basis. These factors have helped to crystalize American thought, have relegated minorities to a barricaded position and predetermined status in society, and have now culminated in the rhetorical fervor surrounding the Allan Bakke case. Those who are in favor of affirmative action policies should make their support known. (Author/EB)

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THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF MINORITY GROUP REPRESENTATION IN THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

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By: Merrill-Jean Bailey

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THE STATUS AND FUTURE OF MINORITY GROUP REPRESENTATION IN THE GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Allow me to preface my presentation with this comment: I have come not as a representative of my employer, the federal government, but rather as a citizen of the United States and a minority group professional in the field of higher education.

Some of my colleagues have suggested that I have tackled the most controversial issue of the decade about which much has been written, particularly in the past few months, and about which very little will undoubtedly be resolved in the ensuing months. The literature on compensatory education is replete, I would agree, with the concerns of the inequities within higher education as they relate to minorities. I am not going to take up your time citing statistic after statistic about minority participation in graduate and professional education. I do think that it is crucial to note that while there have been some gains relative to the increased participation by members of minority groups in this country, the numbers are still highly disproportionate.

We have not put brakes on the revolving door.

We have not gained significant stature in the academic and vocational worlds.

We have not become adequately credentialized, politicized, and mobilized.

And the struggle--less you complacently suggest that the civil rights era has catapulted to an infamous end--is a bona fide struggle, which is currently going through the throes of a major

setback with the enactment of the Bakke drama in California with its rippling effect from coast to coast.

When I first began conceptualizing this paper, I hypothesized that graduate education was increasingly becoming a reality to larger numbers of minority group members, and that the future, educationally, for minorities was gradually approaching the American ideal of equal educational opportunity for all.

The most recent statistics from the U.S. Office of Civil Rights for the Fall, 1974, Semester, however, lead one to question the validity of these hypothetical assumptions. In graduate programs, nationwide (and this percentage does not include the professional curricula such as medicine and law) 9.2% of the graduate school population is minority; broken down by ethnicity this percentage represents .4% American Indian, 5.5% Black, 1.8% Asian American, and 1.5% Spanish Surnamed Americans. For the professional schools these same statistical categories are somewhat lower: a total of 8.1% of the professional schools are composed of minorities, with .3% of that total American Indian, 4.9%, Black, 1.3%, Asian American, and 1.6%, Spanish Surnamed Americans.

The National Board on Graduate Education in their June, 1976, report entitled Minority Group Participation in Graduate Education, states that although minority men and women constitute 16% of the population, they represent less than 6% of the total graduate population. Similarly, a survey by the American Council on Education indicated that of 220 doctoral-granting institutions

(154 of which responded to the survey) the public institutions enrolled 7.4% minority students and the private institutions, 6.5%. While the percentages vary, based on the survey population and the percentage of respondents, the statistics are not very encouraging, are they?

An analytical study of graduate educational opportunities for minority students over the past decade reveals the following conclusions:

1. Initially, there was a great outpouring of funds by the large organizations and private foundations,such as the Ford Foundation, the Alfred P. Slaon Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, etc. When the financial support from these sources began to dwindle, however, while a few institutions maintained the level of support and number of graduate education opportunities for minority students, the majority of the institutions of higher education abruptly decreased the number of minority students that could be assisted financially.
2. A second conclusion that can be drawn is that the majority of the institutions identified as having actively sought minority students, while often providing a substantial amount of financial assistance, did not follow through with a definitive program of academic and other supportive services. For example, of the 1,974 graduate and profess-

ional programs at the various institutions of higher education replying to a questionnaire sent out by Educational Testing Services, the results of which are reported in the 6th edition of Graduate and Professional School Opportunities for Minority Students, 1975-77, 41 academic programs indicated the existence of definitive supportive programs for minority students including recruitment, special admissions provisions, counseling, tutoring, course scheduling and sequencing. While one must acknowledge some statistical deviation because not all institutions responded, it is safe to conclude that the majority of institutions providing graduate education have not developed identifiable supportive services for those disadvantaged students being recruited and admitted.

The bulk of the academic supportive programs, it should be noted, are in technical fields such as law, medicine, business, and engineering, rather than the strictly liberal arts areas. For example, the academic support programs ranged from six to eight week summer sessions where disadvantaged students were provided either basic course instruction in the technical areas or prerequisite courses for those with weak backgrounds. The majority of the institutions where these special programs were cited included the large public institutions.

Minority representation in the graduate and professional schools is not in parity with the proportion of minorities in the overall population at this point in the history of American higher

education. There are definitive reasons for this lack of participation--reasons that have a profound philosophical, sociological,and economic basis. These factors, however, have helped to crystallized American thought, have relegated minorities to a barricaded position and predetermined status in society, and have now culminated in the rhetorical fervor surrounding the Allan Bakke case.

I would like to spend a few moments discussing the Bakke case as it relates to the concerns of minority graduate educational opportunities. If I could have a dollar for every line of print that has been written about the Allan Bakke vs the Regents of the University of California case, including editorials, letters to the editor, columns in nearly every daily newspaper in the country, and the multitude of amicus curiae briefs that have been filed with the U.S. Supreme Court, I could have rented my own private jet to fly to New Orleans for this conference. While I find it unlikely that any of you are not familiar with the Bakke case, as a point of departure, I will summarize what has taken place.

The June 19, 1977, edition of the New York Times editorialized the Bakke case in a tripartite article:

1. Allan Bakke, white male, at the age of 32, applied, along with 2,663 other applicants, to the medical school at the University of California at Davis. There were one hundred spaces for admission, 16 of which were reserved for disadvantaged applicants. It might be pointed out that Mr. Bakke's application was filed

relatively late and that most of the 84 spaces reserved for "advantaged" applicants were filled.

2.. Mr. Bakke was rejected not only by the University of California but also by ten other medical schools to which he had applied, even though his test scores and undergraduate grade point average were relatively high.

3. Mr. Bakke reapplied in 1973 while concurrently threatening to sue the university. Again, while he came close, he was rejected. The Times editorial also intimates that the admissions chairman who interviewed Mr. Bakke at that time scored him conspicuously lower than the interviewer had the previous year. It should also be noted that the odds for an advantaged student being admitted to the medical school the first year in question were 29 to 1, and the odds for 1973 were 44 to 1.

4. Subsequently Mr. Bakke charged the university with racial discrimination and sued on the grounds that he was denied equal protection under the 14th Amendment of the Constitution.

5. The County Court and the California Supreme Court both ruled in favor of Mr. Bakke, and the case is now being heard by the U.S. Supreme Court.

One interesting development in the sequence of events is the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to rule on this case within the parameters of the legal issues involved opposed to a broader ruling on the constitutional issue of equal protection. On the

one hand this decision is positive in that the Bakke case is not an ideal test case to debate the legality of affirmative action in higher education. On the other hand, however, this decision represents an attempt to avert a constitutional issue that is ramifying throughout not only higher education but also employment and other aspects of American life.

Not suprisingly, that which I have read in the newspapers and other sources run along distinct lines:

1. The editorials examine the case in its broader implications for affirmative action in other areas and generally feel that the Bakke case ought not to have constitutional impact.
2. The majority of the letters to the editor tend to side with Mr. Bakke and are in agreement with the purported injustice committed against him by the Regents of the University of California. I attribute this disproportionate outpouring of support for Mr. Bakke on the politicizing of a mobile group of American citizens, who, feeling their educational positions of dominance threatened, attempt to flex the proverbial political muscle with the expectation that they will appear to represent the overall public opinion.
3. While columnists tend to vary in their opinions about the rectitude or injustice of the case, there is the common thread of urgency to have the matter resolved.

4. The amicus curiae briefs,particularly those submitted by the institutions of higher education and civil rights groups, focus on the need and right of institutions to have the flexibility in admissions to diversify their student body, with the hope that the civil rights gains made in the 1960's will not be nullified.

Let us identify a few of the broad issues involved in this case as they relate to graduate and professional education for minority group members.

1. Historically, minorities have been denied access to higher education, and the circumstances of one's birth have predestined, in many instances, one's socio-economic status.
2. Institutions of higher education have not enrolled proportionate numbers of minorities in their graduate and professional programs, but as in the case of the University of California at Davis, attempts are being made by a substantial number of institutions to recruit and provide access to minorities via the special admissions programs.
3. By setting aside a specified number (lovingly referred to as a quota) of spaces for specific racial groups, even though the action has been condoned in the past for other than racial reasons, institutions are rendering themselves vulnerable to the charges of reverse discrim-

ination whereby the majority group can and will decry that they are being denied equal protection under the law.

4. There are a number of "rights" involved in this case, and the court finds itself in the not-so-enviable position of deciding whose "right" weighs more:

--The right of the institution to set and carry out its admission objectives as they relate to the overall institutional goals and objectives. This right, in the case of public institutions supported by public dollars, is accompanied by the attendant obligation to ensure proportionate representation in all facets of institutional life by the poublic which it serves.

--The right of the majority group applicants, in accordance with the institution's admissions criteria, to compete and be considered, in an equitable manner, for the available spaces.

--The right of the minority applicant, in those instances where his or her past experiences reflect the deleterious effects of racial discrimination, to compensation, particularly if it can be shown that he or she has been systematically excluded from full participation in the educational, social, economic, and cultural experiences to which the majority culture has been exposed.

Unfortunately, I do not have a succinct answer to this dilemma. I do suspect that whatever legal decision the U.S. Supreme Court renders, that the perplexing human and socio-economic issues will continue to prevail. As long as there are inner cities with their residential boundaries subscribed by socio-economic status, with their separate but unequal educational systems; as long as the bulk of the minority undergraduate students are unable to get into the quality institutions of higher education and unable to develop the skills to effectively compete with the "advantaged" population for spaces in the graduate and professional schools, there cannot be such a thing as reverse discrimination.

I do not know that there is a simplistic way to undo or make reparation to the masses of minorities who for centuries have resided outside the mainstream of American life.

I do not know that there is a logical means, given the financial constraints of higher education budgeting, to increase minority participation in graduate and professional education without decreasing the number of opportunities for the majority group members.

I do know, however, that those of you who are in favor of affirmative action need to begin to express your views, and I should note that your support of affirmative action policies cannot be unqualified. You cannot just be for increasing admissions for disadvantaged students or for a particular ethnic group but you must also support the development of supportive programs for all disadvantaged students at the graduate and professional levels.

You should contact the institutions of higher education, the various organizations and foundations, and express your viewpoints, inquire about their plans for the future as they relate to the support of minority participation; write letters to the editor of your local newspaper; contact your congressman; let those individuals in decision-making positions know that there is a contingent of the American population that believes firmly in the utility and necessity of affirmative action programs.

You cannot and you must not remain silent because if you do, your silence will portend consensus and this usurptation not only of minority rights and access to higher education but employment, the arts, politics, and other vital aspects of American life will entrench itself firmly in the fiber of our society.

Presented By: Merrill-Jean Bailey